

Preparing for release: Documents and identification

This tool will help you identify the documents and types of forms of identification you need when you transition to the community.

If you are transitioning from incarceration, you may need help with getting or renewing identification documents. Applying for a job or benefits, opening a bank account, and many other activities require documentation of identity. Working to resolve identification and secure documents before release will make it easier for you to achieve goals such as securing housing or benefits.

To obtain your driver's license or identification cards, you have to complete an application and pay an application fee, although some states may provide identification cards for a reduced fee or for free.

What to do

- **Go through the list to see which documents you do and do not have.**
- **Get copies of the documents you don't have.** If you are incarcerated, it is important to find out what the facility's process is for getting documents such as a replacement Social Security card.
- **Store your documents in a safe place.** If you are incarcerated, check with staff at the facility to find out how to store and protect your documents.

A step further

Check with your state resource ahead of time so you know what documents are needed. Before you work with a person who is incarcerated, you might want to ask about the correctional facility's policies with regard to obtaining and storing identity documents.

To access a dynamic and fillable version of this tool, visit <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides/>



Getting documents and identification will ease your transition

1. Review the list and check off those documents you already have.
2. Go back and see which documents you need to get and can get while you are incarcerated.

Document	Status	Where to get it
Certified copy of birth certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	To get a copy of your vital records such as your birth certificate, write to the state in which you were born. Find out where to write for each state by visiting https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm
State picture identification card or driver's license	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	Some states have limited purpose driver's or identification cards for those that cannot meet the identification requirements for the other cards, for example, if you do not have a Social Security number. In some states, there may be restrictions on getting your license or state ID if you have outstanding criminal debt. Check to see if your state offers a payment plan for your debt. To find out your state's requirements visit https://www.usa.gov/motor-vehicle-services
Social Security card	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	To get your Social Security number or a replacement card contact the Social Security Administration at https://www.ssa.gov/reentry
Criminal record or RAP (Record of Arrest and Prosecution) sheet	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	If you have access to a copy of your record or RAP sheet in prison, it is helpful to keep a copy with you as you transition.

Document	Status	Where to get it
Green card or immigration documents (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	<p>For a list of acceptable documents visit https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents. To replace your green card visit https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/after-we-grant-your-green-card/replace-your-green-card. For other countries consulates, see https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/consularnotification/ConsularNotificationandAccess.html. For those with green cards or other immigration status, there are complicated legal issues involved after an arrest or conviction. Learn more at https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners</p>
Proof of residency	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	<p>Find out which documents your state accepts, such as a rental or lease agreement, utility bills, or other documentation with your name. Check to see if there are any special rules for incarcerated or formerly incarcerated in your state. Visit https://www.usa.gov/motor-vehicle-services</p>
Medical records or immunization records	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	<p>To get a copy of your medical or immunization records, you need to contact your medical provider(s). Find out which documents you need to apply for Medicaid or health insurance at https://www.healthcare.gov/incarcerated-people</p>
Bank or credit union account information	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	<p>Contact your bank or credit union directly. In addition to picture identification, they may ask for Social Security cards and other information. See Module 8, Tool: Opening a checking or savings account. https://www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides/#anchor_reentry</p>
Selective service record or draft registration	<input type="checkbox"/> Have it <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered it <input type="checkbox"/> Need help	<p>Registration with Selective Service may be required for certain federal programs and benefits. Learn more about registering at https://www.sss.gov/register/who-needs-to-register/</p>